
Subject: Dave's Capsules for December 2019
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Dave's Comicbook Capsules Et Cetera
Intermittent Picks and Pans of Comics and Related Media

Standard Disclaimers: Please set appropriate followups. Recommendation does not factor in price. Not all books will have arrived in your area this month. An archive can be found on my homepage, <http://www.eyrie.org/~dvandom/Rants>
Got to spend a couple nights in the hospital for the first time.

Items of Note (strongly recommended or otherwise worthy): None.

In this installment: DC Superhero Girls S1 Ep14-21, Dirty Pair Omnibus, Agents of Atlas #5 (of 5), Ghost Spider #5, History of the Marvel Universe #6 (of 6), Deathstroke #50, Vampirella vol 5 #6, Dragonfly & Dragonflyman #2, Ragnarok: the Storming of Helheim #3 (of 6), Heroes of the Golden Age Reference Guide #1-3.

Current Wait List (books either Diamond didn't ship or my store failed to order): Nothing this time.

"Other Media" Capsules:

Things that are comics-related but not necessarily comics (i.e. comics-based movies like Iron Man or Hulk), or that aren't going to be available via comic shops (like comic pack-ins with DVDs) will go in this section when I have any to mention. They may not be as timely as comic reviews, especially if I decide to review novels that take me a week or two (or ten) to get around to.

<http://www.thefifth.world/2019/12/capes-vs-goggles-book-repo.html> for my Fifth World post comparing and contrasting the first books of two superhero novel series, Wearing the Cape and Please Don't Tell My Parents I'm A Supervillain.

DC Superhero Girls S1 E14-21: DC/Netflix - Well, the next batch of episodes did drop, and it was a real mixed bag. They continued to have what seemed to be meant as villain introduction episodes happen after the villain appears (and it's particularly confusing given some topical references), and the whole mini-arc of "Robin is a Dick...Grayson" (my joke, not theirs) was a bit of a stretch. The two-part finale was okay, if pushing some of the gags a little too far. Mildly recommended.

Digital Content:

Unless I find a really compelling reason to do so, I won't be turning this into a webcomic review column. Rather, stuff in this section will be full books available for reading online or for download, usually for pay. I will often be reading these things on my iPhone if it's at all possible.

Nothing this month.

Trades:

Trade paperbacks, collections, graphic novels, pocket manga, whatever. If it's bigger than a "floppy" it goes here.

Dirty Pair Omnibus: Seven Seas Entertainment - So, this is a new translation and collection of the 1980 "Dirty Pair No Daibouken" by Haruka Takachiho (creator of the Dirty Pair) and Hisao Tamaki (best known to American readers as the artist on the Star Wars Manga). It has three stories, two full length and one short. The first story is an adaptation of the first Dirty Pair "light novel," not sure if the other two first appeared as prose stories. (I'm sure of the first, since I have a "learn English" translation of the first novel.) I will say this: every other adaptation of the Dirty Pair since this has toned it down a bit. Tamaki's DP have breasts nearly bigger than their heads, and there's a touch of nudity here and there as well. Their psychic abilities, downplayed or outright eliminated in later adaptations, are presented here as VERY sexual in their use. Like, ahogao territory. (If you don't know what that means, you probably don't want to look it up.) The second main story also has a serious Trigger Warning sequence in which the Lovely Angels have a vision of the tragic backstory of the antagonist (rape mostly).

Dave Lumsdon's translation is modern and idiomatic, so no obvious machine translation crap in here like some manga translations suffer. It's not mirror-flopped, so no need to have an artist go back and fix all the AWWW logos that would result, but it's kinda awkward for me to read a book this thick (392 pages) in reverse direction. If you're a Dirty Pair fan already, you might enjoy this look at the earliest version of the characters, who have diverged so strongly for American audiences under the hand of Adam Warren. Maybe not a good introduction to the Lovely Angels, though, because what followed was so different and it's gonna be hard to find more with this version of the pair (Mughi especially got changed a lot...he's in full Dark Destroyer mode here, firing organic energy beams and disassembling enemies a la A.E. van Vogt's creation). Provisionally recommended, but definitely a Mature Readers warning. \$18.99/\$21.99Cn

Floppies:

No, I don't have any particular disdain for the monthlies, but they

are floppy, yes? (And not all of them come out monthly, or on a regular schedule in general, so I can't just call this section "Monthlies" or even "Periodicals" as that implies a regular period.)

Agents of Atlas (2019) #5 (of 5): Marvel - Wow. Like, almost no resolution at all, it ends on a "to be continued in another comic" cliffhanger. What a gorram waste of time and paper. Avoid the whole series.

Ghost Spider (2019) #5: Marvel - Nothing highlights how pathetic a villain's motives are than having his alternate-Earth self mock him for it. Unfortunately, while this has now been appropriately lampshaded, it doesn't stop the villain's motives from being pathetic. This really feels like the sort of thing that should have been resolved in a "hero hunter versus Saitama" one page joke, rather than being made the core of the first year of the rebooted title. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

History of the Marvel Universe #6 (of 6): Marvel - A couple of pages given to things other than Mega-Events, but otherwise it's a page per event for the last six years, then a plot device to have the retelling get all scattered about future stories (with nods to things like Killraven). Really drives home the point that very little has actually happened that's gonna leave an impact. One nice bit at the end is a listing of some of the characters and groups who didn't make it into the summary but are considered noteworthy (like Nextwave). Mildly recommended. \$4.99

Deathstroke #50: DC - FINAL ISSUE. The main theme throughout the Priest Deathstroke series has been Slade teetering back and forth between being a mercenary and being a guy who cares about something other than the contract. During the Defiance arc, he swung too far in one direction, and his "Dark Multiverse" doppelganger (who may or may not be from the technical Dark Multiverse, just one where things went more darkly) shows what happens when he swings too far the other way. As per some post-game interviews, Darkstroke is also closer to how Priest would have written the book if he hadn't needed to play nice with the shared universe...and I think this is one of those cases where restrictions make for better writing. Because Slade works best in that unstable equilibrium balanced on the edge of a sword. He can't just settle down and be a good guy, but neither can he deny that temptation for long, he always teeters back and forth. Too much one way or the other will destroy him. It's a pity that almost every other use of Deathstroke we're likely to see in media is going to be purely Darkstroke. Recommended. \$4.99 (oversized issue)

Vampirella vol 5 #6: Dynamite - The second thing this month to have its sixth episode titled The Prisoner (The Mandalorian beat it by a bit). Heh. Gimmick cover with a clear wraparound cover with transparent red blood effects...that's the second clear wraparound cover gimmick on a Priest book in as many months. Is he determined to bring back the early 90s? ;) Vampi's

personal life continues to fall apart, but we're still in flashback mode...starting to wonder if we'll actually catch up to the "present" before #12? Anyway, even though we've known since #1 who makes it through to the present and who almost definitely doesn't, Priest is doing a good job of keeping it engaging. Recommended. \$3.99

Dragonfly & Dragonflyman #2: Ahoy Comics - Eh. This just isn't holding my interest the way the first miniseries did. On a technical level, the "retelling the same basic story under two worldviews" idea is well-executed, but it feels like just a technical exercise. Very mildly recommended. \$3.99

Ragnarok: the Storming of Helheim #3 (of 6): IDW - Very weird pacing, as if Thor keeps forgetting about one or more foes and they just sort of cool their heels until he gets around to noticing they're still in need of smiting. It's as if Simonson had a checklist of plot points that needed to be gotten through before he could go on to the next location, but wasn't giving it his full attention, just doing them in whatever order and then stitching them together to meet deadline. Some bonus points for using a reference to Thor's adventure against Utgardloki, though. Mildly recommended. \$3.99

Heroes of the Golden Age Reference Guide #1-3: Temporal Comics - This is a series of Kickstarter-funded books in the mold of Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe, but featuring all the public domain heroes (in fact, it was initially titled Heroes of the Public Domain). I got my copies of the first three through IndyPlanet.com, the fourth's KS just completed this month. It's...clearly a fan effort. A lot of the writeups read like they started out twice as long and were chopped down to fit wordcount via deletion rather than by means of careful rewrites. The new art is mostly by Chris Malgrain, doing a rather thorough John Byrne imitation. Sure, a lot of the characters in these have been published over and over in recent years (especially by Dynamite lately), but a few of them are obscure enough or weird enough no one has tried reviving them. (Probably not a great idea to try to revive Tomboy.) Mildly recommended, kinda variable prices per issue due to print on demand model.

Dave Van Domelen, "I would wish you luck...but I actually do not." - Raven, Deathstroke #50
